

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY RANGOON

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

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EO 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: ASSISTANCE TO THE THAI POLICE FOR NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT

REF: A. STATE 145369 B. BANGKOK 10310 C. BANGKOK 10301

SUMMARY: THE THAI NATIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT IS NOT ABLE TO MAINTAIN A FORCE LEVEL IN THE FAR NORTH OF THAILAND CONSISTENT WITH THE DEMANDS OF ACCELERATED NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION, NORMAL LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND COUNTERINSURGENCY ACTIVITIES, GIVEN ITS PRESENT STATE OF EQUIPMENT. FOUR ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS TO THE TNPD TO IMPROVE ITS CAPABILITIES, ENCOURAGE IT TO EXPAND ITS RECENT SUCCESSES AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS INTO A MORE CONTINUOUS, INTENSIVE ENFORCEMENT PRESENCE IN THE FAR NORTH, AND GIVE US LEVERAGE FOR BRINGING ABOUT CONTINUED ACCELERATION IN RTG NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT WE BE AUTHORIZED TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE RTG TO PROVIDE FOUR UH-1H HELICOPTERS TO THE TNPD ON TERMS OUTLINED BELOW. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH THE RTG HAS MADE A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN NARCOTICS SEIZURES THIS YEAR AND HAS ARRESTED IMPORTANT TRAFFICKERS CUSH AS LO HSING-HAN AND LU PENG KIA, THE THAI NATIONAL POLICE

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DEPARTMENT (TNPD) DOES NOT AT PRESENT HAVE A CONSTANT ENFORCEMENT

CAPABILITY IN THE FAR NORTH OF THAILAND ADEQUATE TO DO THE JOB THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE. THE BORDER PATROL POLICE (BPP) REGION 5 (FAR NORTH REGION) IS UNDERMANNED AND SUFFERS FROM A SHORTAGE OF EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING MODERN ASSAULT WEAPONS AND AIRLIFT CAPABILITY. THE TOTAL STRENGTH OF BPP 5 IS 1634 MEN, 80 PERCENT OF ITS PRESENT AUTHORIZATION. FURTHER THE BPP HAS ONLY SIX PLATOONS TALLING 190 MEN IN NORTHERN MAE HONG SON AND NORTHERN CHIANG MAI PROVINCES, THE AREAS OF GREATEST NARCOTICS CONCERN. EACH OF THESE TWO PROVINCES HAS A BORDER INFORMATION CENTER (BIC) WITH ELEVEN MEN. THE TWO BIC UNITS ARE VIRTUALLY THE ONLY RTG ARMED PRESENCE NORTH OF THE PAI RIVER, BUT THEIR MISSION IS NOT TO ENGAGE CARAVANS. EVEN WITH ITS PRESENT LIMITED MANPOWER, BPP 5 SHOULD HAVE ABOUT 650 ASSAULT RIFLES; IT HAS ONLY 306. MOREOVER, BPP 5 HAS OTHER IMPORTANT FUNCTIONS IN ADDITION TO NARCOTICS ENFORCEMENT.

2. BPP 5 IS FACED WITH A NUMBER OF WELL-ORGANIZED GROUPS INVOLVED IN NARCOTICS SMUGGLING. MOST OF THESE GROUPS OUTNUMBER AND OUTGUN THE INDIVIDUAL, PERMANENTLY STATIONED BPP UNITS. IF THE TNPD IS TO HAVE MORE THAN SPORADIC SUCCESSES AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS IN THE FAR NORTH, THE BPP IN REGION 5 REQUIRES A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN MEN AND EQUIPMENT.

3. TO REMEDY THESE EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES, PROVIDE LEVERAGE TO INDUCE THE RTG TO TAKE CARE OF THE MANPOWER SITUATION, AND GIVE THE THAI THE WHEREWITHALL TO CONTINUE TO ACCELERATE THEIR ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS, WE BELIEVE THE USG SHOULD NEGOTIATE WITH THE RTG TO PROVIDE THE TNPD WITH FOUR ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS FROM AID NARCOTICS FUNDS. IN RETURN FOR THESE HELICOPTERS WE WOULD REQUIRE AN RTG COMMITMENT TO BEEF UP BPP AND THE PROVINCIAL POLICE (PP) STRENGTH AND TO PROVIDE OTHER TYPES OF EQUIPMENT TO SUPPORT THIS BUILDUP IN THE FAR NORTH.

4. AN ADDITIONAL FOUR HELICOPTERS, COMBINED WITH AN INCREASED TNPD PRESENCE IN THE FAR NORTH, WOULD GREATLY INCREASE THE RTG ABILITY TO REACT AGAINST NARCOTICS TRAFFICKERS IN THOSE PARTS OF THAILAND WHERE THE RTG AT PRESENT HAS LITTLE OR NO ENFORCEMENT CAPABILITY. THE INCREASED TNPD PRESENCE IN THE FAR NORTH WOULD ENABLE THE RTG TO IMPROVE ITS INTELLIGENCE ABOUT ACARAVANS TRANSITING THE AREA AS WELL AS ITS ABILITY TO MOUNT OPERATIONS

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AGAINST THEM.HELICOPTERS ALONE COULD GIVE THE THAI POLICE THE ABILITY TO LAND MEN IN THE REMOTE AREAS WHERE TRAFFICKERS OPERATE.

5. THE HELICOPTERS COULD BE USED NOT ONLY TO AUGMENT THE RTG ABILITY TO REINFORCE THE TNPD STRENGTH IN THE FAR NORTH FOR SPECIAL OPERATIONS BUT WOULD ALSO IMPROVE ITS ABILITY TO MOVE QUICKLY IN AIR-SEA OPERATIONS AGAINST THE TRAWLERS

WHICH LOAD OPIUM AT MANY REMOTE POINTS ALONG THE GULF OF SIAM.

6. THE JUNE 1 PROAG TO PROVIDE TWO UH-1 HELICOPTERS, EVEN THOUGH THEY HAVE NOT YET ARRIVED IN THAILAND, HAS ALREADY IMPROVED OUR ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE THAI POLICE ON NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION. WE BELIEVE THIS CLEAR EVIDENCE OF OUR CONCERN, AND OUR WILLINGNESS TO HELP THE THAI IMPROVE THEIR CAPABILITIES, CONTRIBUTED TO RTG WILLINGNESS TO TAKE THE QUANTUM JUMP OF MOVING AGAINST CARAVANS. THIS PROAG REQUIRED THE RTG TO USE TNPD AIRCRAFT FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION AT A RATE OF AT LEAST 70 HOURS PER MONTH. FROM JUNE 11 TO JULY 31 THAI POLICE UNITS ACTUALLY REQUESTED AND RECEIVED 236 HOURS OF AIR SUPPORT FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS. WE CONSIDER THIS CLEAR EVIDENCE THAT ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT WOULD BE USED FREQUENTLY AND CONSTRUCTIVELY IN A NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION ROLE.

7. THE TNPd CURRENTLY HAS EIGHTEEN UTILITY HELICOPTERS IN ITS INVENTORY FOR THE ENTIRE COUNTRY. DURING THE PAST SIX MONTHS THE EIGHTEEN HELICOPTERS HAVE AVERAGED 31 FLYING HOURS EACH PER MONTH WHICH IS 77 PERCENT OF THE 40 FLIGHTS HOURS PROGRAMMED (40 HOURS IS BETTER THAN THE WORLDWIDE AVERAGE FOR THIS TYPE HELICOPTER). THE TNPd HAD AN AVERAGE OF THIRTEEN OF THESE HELICOPTERS AVAILABLE EACH DAY WHICH REPRESENTS A MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY RATE OF 73 PERCENT (OPTIMUM MAINTENANCE AVAILABILITY RATE IS 75 PERCENT). TWELVE OF THE HELICOPTERS ARE ASSIGNED TO SUPPORT THE POLICE FIELD ELEMENTS IN ELEVEN GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS AND ONE IS USED FOR TRAINING AND TO AUGMENT THE OTHER AIRCRAFT IN THE FIELD. THESE TWELVE HELICOPTERS AVERAGED 44 FLYING HOURS PER MONTH WHICH EXCEEDS THE NUMBER OF HOURS PROGRAMMED; THEREFORE, THE UTILIZATION RATE IS CONSIDERED EXCELLENT. THEY ARE NOT ONLY USED FOR NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION, BUT ALSO FOR COUNTERINSURGENCY AND NORMAL LAW ENFORCEMENT SUPPORT. SINCE THIS MISSION IS URGING
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AN INCREASED USE OF THE AIRCRAFT FOR ALL THE TNPd OPERATIONS AND AN EXPANSION OF THEIR FORCE LEVELS, WE CAN EXPECT A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE DEMAND FOR HELICOPTER SUPPORT FROM OPERATIONAL UNITS IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE. AN ADDITIONAL SIX HELICOPTERS (TWO ALREADY ON ORDER PLUS THE FOUR REQUESTED IN THIS TELEGRAM) WOULD BE THE MINIMUM NUMBER NECESSARY FOR THE TNPd TO MAINTAIN A CONTINUOUS USE OF AIR ASSETS IN THE TYPE OF NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION ROLE WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE. FOR OPERATIONS AGAINST CARAVANS AND STORAGE AREAS, A FULL PLATOON OF SPECIAL POLICE REINFORCEMENTS MUST BE MOVED DURING THE INITIAL ASSAULT, WHICH REQUIRES THE SIMULTANEOUS USE OF FIVE HELICOPTERS PLUS ONE BACK-UP, IN ONE ISOLATED AREA OF THE NORTH. GIVEN OTHER OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING MOVES AGAINST TRAWLERS WHICH WE ARE STRONGLY URGING THE RTG TO MAKE, THE POLICE AVIATION DIVISION CANNOT AND SHOULD NOT STRIP ITS CAPABILITIES IN OTHER AREAS.

8. USOM PREFERS FURTHER STUDY ABOUT THE FEASIBILITY OF TNPD UTILIZATION OF FOUR ADDITIONAL UTILITY HELICOPTERS, AND IS EXPLORING IN DEPTH THE PROJECTED TNPD UTILIZATION OF AIR ASSETS. WE WILL FORWARD THE RESULTS OF THE USOM STUDY BY MID-SEPTEMBER.

9. SINCE HIS DECEMBER 1972 APPOINTMENT AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE TNPD, POLICE LT. GENERAL PRACHUAB SUNTHARANGKUL HAS BEEN A PRINCIPAL FORCE BEHIND RTG NARCOTICS SUPPRESSION EFFORTS. HE HAS DONE THIS AT SOME RISK TO HIS OWN STANDING WITH OTHER RTG POLITICAL LEADERS AND IS ALREADY UNDER ATTACK FROM OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE RTG FOR MOVING AGAINST DISSIDENT ELEMENTS AND CARAVANS IN THE NORTH. IT IS IN OUR INTEREST TO GIVE HIM TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF OUR SUPPORT IN ORDER TO ENCOURAGE HIS EFFORTS FURTHER AND TO SUSTAIN HIS POSITION WITHIN THE RTG LEADERSHIP.

10. IF THE GOVERNMENT OF BURMA RECEIVES ANYTHING NEAR THE EIGHTEEN HELICOPTERS WHICH IT HAS REQUESTED FROM THE USG, AND USES THEM AGAINST NARCOTICS REFINERIES AND TRAFFICKERS IN NORTHEAST BURMA, MANY FACTORIES AND TRAFFICKERS WOULD LIKELY TRY TO MOVE ACROSS THE BORDER INTO NORTHERN THAILAND. THIS WOULD FURTHER COMPLICATE THAILAND'S ENFORCEMENT PROBLEMS. REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE AID PACKAGE FOR BURMA GOES AHEAD, WE BELIEVE THAT THAILAND NEEDS THESE ADDITIONAL HELICOPTERS, AND WILL USE THEM CONSTRUCTIVELY, MAKING A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO RTG AND
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USG ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS.

11. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT WE BE AUTHORIZED IMMEDIATELY TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE RTG TO PROVIDE FOUR UH-1H HELICOPTERS ON THE TERMS OUTLINED ABOVE. ON COMPLETION OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, THE HELICOPTERS SHOULD ARRIVE EXPEDITIOUSLY SO AS NOT TO DELAY ACHIEVEMENT OF OUR OBJECTIVES.
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